

terminate further assessment of interest and administrative costs when the collection of such interest and costs are determined to be not in the government's best interest. Collection of interest and administrative costs shall not be considered to be in the best interest of the government when the amount of assessed interest and administrative cost is so large that there is a reasonable certainty that the original debt will never be repaid. The determination to forbear collection of interest and administrative cost, exclusive of collection of the principal of the debt, shall be made by the Chief of the Fiscal activity at the station responsible for the collection of the debt. Such a determination is not within the jurisdiction of a Committee on Waivers and Compromises.

(2) [Reserved]

(g) Administrative costs assessed under this section shall be the average costs of collection of similar debts, or actual collection costs as may be accurately determined in the particular case. No administrative costs of collection will be assessed under this section in any cases where the indebtedness is paid in full prior to the 30-day period specified in paragraph (e) of this section, or in any case where a repayment plan is proposed by the debtor and accepted by VA within that 30-day period, unless such repayment agreement becomes delinquent (as defined in 31 CFR 900.2(b)).

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3717; 38 U.S.C. 501, 5302, 5315)

[46 FR 62057, Dec. 22, 1981, as amended at 52 FR 42107, Nov. 3, 1987. Redesignated and amended at 69 FR 62195, Oct. 25, 2004]

§ 1.916 Disclosure of debt information to consumer reporting agencies (CRA).

(a) The Department of Veterans Affairs may disclose all information determined to be necessary, including the name, address, Department of Veterans Affairs file number, Social Security number, and date of birth, to consumer reporting agencies for the purpose of—

(1) Obtaining the location of an individual indebted to the United States as a result of participation in any benefits program administered by VA or indebted in any other manner to VA;

(2) Obtaining a consumer report in order to assess an individual's ability to repay a debt when such individual has failed to respond to the Department's demand for repayment or when such individual has notified the Department that he/she will not repay the indebtedness; or

(3) Obtaining the location of an individual in order to conduct program evaluation studies as required by 38 U.S.C. 527 or any other law.

(b) Information disclosed by the Department of Veterans Affairs under paragraph (a) of this section to consumer reporting agencies shall neither expressly nor implicitly indicate that an individual is indebted to the United States nor shall such information be recorded by consumer reporting agencies in a manner that reflects adversely upon the individual. Prior to disclosing this information, the Department of Veterans Affairs shall ascertain that consumer reporting agencies with which it contracts are able to comply with this requirement. The Department of Veterans Affairs shall also make reasonable efforts to insure compliance by its contractor with this requirement.

(c) Subject to the conditions set forth in paragraph (d) of this section, information concerning individuals may be disclosed to consumer reporting agencies for inclusion in consumer reports pertaining to the individual, or for the purpose of locating the individual. Disclosure of the fact of indebtedness will be made if the individual fails to respond in accordance with written demands for repayment, or refuses to repay a debt to the United States. In making any disclosure under this section, VA will provide consumer reporting agencies with sufficient information to identify the individual, including the individual's name, address, if known, date of birth, VA file number, and Social Security number.

(d)(1) Prior to releasing information under paragraph (c) of this section, the Department of Veterans Affairs will send a notice to the individual. This notice will inform the individual that—

(i) The Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that he or she is indebted to the Department of Veterans Affairs;

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(ii) The debt is presently delinquent; and

(iii) The fact of delinquency may be reported to consumer reporting agencies after 30 days have elapsed from the date of the notice.

(2)(i) In accordance with § 1.911 and § 1.911a, VA shall notify each individual of the right to dispute the existence and amount of the debt and to request a waiver of the debt, if applicable.

(ii) If the Department of Veterans Affairs has not previously notified the individual of the rights described in paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section, the Department of Veterans Affairs will include this information in the notice described in paragraph (d)(1) of this section. The individual shall be afforded a minimum of 30 days from the date of the notice to respond to it before information is reported to consumer reporting agencies.

(3) The Department of Veterans Affairs will defer reporting information to a consumer reporting agency if the individual disputes the existence or amount of any debt or requests waiver of the debt within the time limits set forth in paragraph (d)(2)(ii) of this section. The Department of Veterans Affairs will review any dispute and notify the individual of its findings. If the original decision is determined to be correct, or if the individual's request for waiver is denied, the Department of Veterans Affairs may report the fact of delinquency to a consumer reporting agency. However, the individual shall be afforded 30 days from date of the notice of the agency's determination to repay the debt.

(4) Nothing in this section affects an individual's right to appeal an agency decision to the Board of Veterans Appeals. However, information concerning the debt may be disclosed while an appeal is pending before the Board of Veterans Appeals.

(5) Upon request, the Department of Veterans Affairs will notify an individual—

(i) Whether information concerning a debt has been reported to consumer reporting agencies;

(ii) Of the name and address of each consumer reporting agency to which information has been released; and

(iii) Of the specific information released.

A notice of the right to request this information will be sent with the notice described in paragraph (d)(1) of this section.

(e) Subsequent to disclosure of information to consumer reporting agencies as described in paragraph (c) of this section, the Department of Veterans Affairs shall:

(1) Notify on a monthly basis each consumer reporting agency concerned of any substantial change in the status or amount of indebtedness.

(2) Promptly verify any and all information disclosed if so requested by the consumer reporting agency concerned.

(f) In the absence of a different rule prescribed by statute, contract, or other regulation, an indebtedness is considered delinquent if not paid by the individual by the date due specified in the notice of indebtedness, unless satisfactory arrangements are made by such date.

(g) Notification shall be considered sufficient when effected by ordinary mail, addressed to the last known address, and such notice is not returned as undeliverable by postal authorities.

(h) The Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a) does not apply to any contract between the Department of Veterans Affairs and a consumer reporting agency, nor does it apply to a consumer reporting agency and its employees. See 38 U.S.C. 5701(i). This paragraph does not relieve the Department of Veterans Affairs of its obligation to comply with the Privacy Act.

(i) The term "consumer reporting agency" means any person or agency which, for monetary fees, dues, or on a cooperative nonprofit basis, regularly engages in whole or in part in the practice of assembling or evaluating consumer credit information or other information on consumers for the purpose of furnishing consumer reports to third parties or to other consumer reporting agencies. The term "consumer reporting agency" shall also mean any person or agency which serves as a marketing agent under arrangements enabling third parties to obtain such information from consumer reporting

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agencies, or which obtain such information for the purpose of furnishing it to consumer reporting agencies.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3711(e); 38 U.S.C. 501, 5701(g) and (i))

[46 FR 62058, Dec. 22, 1981, as amended at 52 FR 42107, Nov. 3, 1987. Redesignated and amended at 69 FR 62195, Oct. 25, 2004]

§ 1.917 Contracting for collection services.

(a) VA has authority to contract for collection services to recover delinquent debts, provided that:

(1) The authority to resolve disputes, compromise claims, suspend or terminate collection and refer the matter for litigation shall be retained by VA;

(2) The contractor shall be subject to 38 U.S.C. 5701, and to the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, to the extent specified in 5 U.S.C. 552a(m), and to applicable Federal and State laws and regulations pertaining to debt collection practices, such as the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. 1692 *et seq.*

(3) The contractor shall be required to strictly account for all amounts collected;

(4) Upon returning an account to VA for subsequent referral to the Department of Justice for litigation, the contractor must agree to provide any data contained in its files relating to § 1.951.

(b) In accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3718(d), or as otherwise permitted by law, collection service contracts may be funded in the following manner:

(1) VA may fund a collection service contract on a fixed-fee basis (*i.e.*, payment of a fixed fee determined without regard to the amount actually collected under the contract). Payment of the fee under this type of contract must be charged to available appropriations;

(2) VA may also fund a collection service contract on a contingent-fee basis (*i.e.*, by including a provision in the contract permitting the contractor to deduct its fee from amounts collected under the contract). The fee should be based upon a percentage of the amount collected, consistent with prevailing commercial practice;

(3) VA may enter into a contract under paragraph (b)(1) of this section only if and to the extent that funding for the contract is provided for in ad-

vance by an appropriation act or other legislation, except that this requirement does not apply to the use of a revolving fund authorized by statute;

(4) Except as authorized under paragraphs (b)(2) and (b)(5) of this section, or unless otherwise specifically provided by law, VA shall deposit all amounts recovered under collection service contracts for Loan Guaranty debts into the Loan Guaranty Revolving Fund, and for all other debts in the Treasury as miscellaneous receipts pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3302.

(5) For benefit overpayments recovered under collection service contract, VA, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3302, shall deposit:

(i) Amounts equal to the original overpayments in the appropriations account from which the overpayments were made, and

(ii) Amount of interest or administrative costs in the Treasury as miscellaneous receipts.

(c) VA shall use government-wide debt collection contracts to obtain debt collection services provided by private collection contractors. However, VA may refer debts to private collection contractors pursuant to a contract between VA and a private collection contractor only if such debts are not subject to the requirement to transfer debts to Treasury for debt collection. See 31 U.S.C. 3711(g), 31 CFR 285.12(e), and 38 CFR 1.910.

(d) VA may enter into contracts for locating and recovering assets of the United States, such as unclaimed assets.

(e) VA may enter into contracts for debtor asset and income search reports. In accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3718(d), such contracts may provide that the fee a contractor charges the agency for such services may be payable from the amounts recovered, unless otherwise prohibited by statute.

(Authority: 31 U.S.C. 3718; 38 U.S.C. 501)

[52 FR 42107, Nov. 3, 1987. Redesignated and amended at 69 FR 62195, Oct. 25, 2004]

§ 1.918 Use and disclosure of mailing addresses.

(a) When attempting to locate a debtor in order to compromise or collect a debt in accordance with §§ 1.900 through 1.953, VA may send a request to the